

Notes from Arlington Youth Health and Safety Coalition
Cultural Competence Training Nov 15, 2012
5:30-7:00

Facilitator, Emily Bhargava, Connection Lab, LLC

Welcome: (16) Emily Bhargava, Chris Schultz, Judith Carroll, Joe Curro, John Scheft, Lynn Horgan, Kathy Hirsch, Ethel Doyle, Carlene Newell, Ned Walsh, Rebecca Wolfe, Laura Juitt, Christine Connolly, Cindy Sheridan, Linda Suzuki, Colleen Leger

Desired Outcomes:

- A shared, clear understanding of how to think about diversity in the context of the coalition
- Concrete ideas about how to make the group and its meetings welcoming to a diversity of members
- Ideas about how to track and report on the coalition's diversity

We did a quick pair discussion of what one thing is that no one would know about you just by looking, then discussed **definitions of culture and some of their implications for the coalition.**

Culture, according to Merriam-webster online dictionary, is:

a : the integrated pattern of human knowledge, belief, and behavior that depends upon the capacity for learning and transmitting knowledge to succeeding generations

b : the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group;
also : the characteristic features of everyday existence (as diversions or a way of life) shared by people in a place or time

c : the set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes an institution or organization <a corporate *culture* focused on the bottom line>

d : the set of values, conventions, or social practices associated with a particular field, activity, or societal characteristic

We also looked at a graphic called the diversity wheel to think about the multiple axes of diversity. It can be viewed at:

http://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.diversitycentral.com/images/toolkit/dimensionsofdiveristy.gif&imgrefurl=http://www.diversitycentral.com/tools_and_resources/mtb/1.php&h=346&w=342&sz=9&tbnid=nRckBiAlhRwdKM:&tbnh=90&tbnw=89&zoom=1&usq=__m3yczRIGDdFwbtrF6F6B1NupWOg=&docid=IA8Z09-yUA4DYM&sa=X&ei=yISqUMLUAsWy0AGC_YD4Dw&ved=0CDYQ9QEwAQ&dur=650

We added a few additional categories to the wheel: politics, health behavior, substance use patterns and learning style.

We then discussed **the coalition's goals in terms of diversity.** Cultural competence is an ongoing process and we thought about how to put it into practice in the short term. We hope that if our cultural competence work goes well the following will be true:

- The community perceives the coalition as welcoming and open to everyone
- Someone not engaged feels comfortable coming and expressing their opinion

- More people will be here
- We will have more ways to engage youth in the coalition
- We will find and engage groups we don't already agree with
- We will work with more people in their 20s and early 30s
- We will include a broader range of parents
- More outreach to staff at group homes that deal with substance abuse and mental health will be involved
- We will include recent immigrants and English Language Learners
- We will have reached out to pharmacies and doctors' offices

In order to identify **concrete ways to make the coalition more inviting**, we thought together about what it would be like for a new person being invited to the coalition and what it would be like for someone coming to a meeting or event for the first time.

Below is the list that we developed:

Reasons people might not join

- Worry that my opinions aren't the "right" opinions
- The word "join" sounds scary

Ways to make joining the group more enticing

- Someone to go with
- Contact with other members outside the meeting room
- Contact list of anyone who wants to share their info
- Have events or opportunities to just observe
- Use a universal message about safety
- Set an engaging and important theme or topic for specific meetings (e.g. sports and youth)
- Don't use the word "join"
- Offer different levels of participation

Ways to make meetings welcoming

- Have stands with people's names and affiliations on them
- Send the agenda ahead of time
- Have refreshments
- Be clear about what info about membership and conversation will be made public
- Make it clear that it's an accepting group where everyone's opinion is respected
- Disagree without being disagreeable
- Hold open meetings

Other potential ways members and interested people could be engaged

- Sign that they agree with a statement and join a list to receive the coalition newsletter
- Come to an educational event
- Do a survey
- Assist at a collection site
- Help with table talks

- Commit to devoting 10 minutes/year to thinking about this issue
- (we talked about creating short descriptions of what people could do, like a job description, that describe the specific role and time commitment, and possibly the skills that someone would need to have)

Outreach and engagement- going to where people already are

- Go out and talk to people to raise awareness, talk about the coalition, gather their perceptions and possibly recruit them
- Put questions in the town census survey
- Talk to:
 - Sports groups
 - Parents at athletic sign-ups
 - Sophomore parent night
 - Young people at bars
 - High Rock, Cavalry and other churches
 - Group homes
 - People at libraries
 - AYCC parents
- Liquor licensees (use a hand-out when they're applying for a license)

We discussed **documenting the Coalition's diversity**, both to inform the group and to provide information to guide outreach efforts. We talked about the fact that the group now only tracks members' names, affiliations and how they got involved. The group might want to consider optional questions about economic background, substance abuse connections in the family, and other demographics.

Next steps / Actions

- A small Short term Action Team will generate an outreach plan and list of one-on-ones, as well as identify people to do the one-on-ones
- The small group will create or revise a hand out about the coalition that includes specific ways to be involved (this will be used at parent forums as well as other events)
- The small group will try to articulate what the coalition meetings are used for, so that new members can understand what joining would mean
- The small group will flesh out the "short term action teams" even more

Meeting evaluation:

Positives: open conversation, not a set agenda, left with a clear action plan, stuck to the agenda, kept on topic, good to be challenged to think about this topic and recognize "our bubble"

Things to improve: time-constrained, more to think about ahead of time, possibly a survey or pre-post would have been good